

oceans of debris, NMFS offers information to schools, marine parks, organizations, and individuals who want to learn what they can do to help the recovery of this species. NMFS also sets up signs on beaches where monk seals are most likely to breed or visit informing visitors how to avoid disturbing the sea animals.

Fortunately, the agency is supported by other organizations that have fostered efforts for the recovery of this unique and beautiful species. These include: the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, which assists and supports NMFS's recovery efforts; Earthtrust and the Hawaii Wildlife Fund, which promote awareness of and education about the Hawaiian monk seal; Sea Life Park Hawaii, which has in the past offered rehabilitation for monk seal pups; and Dolphin Quest, which financially supports monk seal recovery efforts.

In addition to these organized efforts to save the monk seal, I should recognize the conservation conscious beachgoers, fishermen, and other individuals, who go out of their way to ensure that their activities do not disturb or harm Hawaiian monk seals or other marine life. By simply picking up trash before they leave the beach, beachgoers can do much to promote the survival of the Hawaiian monk seal. Fishermen can also help by being aware of where they fish and making sure that they do not cast their lines in an area where Hawaiian monk seals may inhabit and accidentally bite onto a baited hook. It is also important to make sure that fishing lines and nets are not left in the ocean for a monk seal to swallow or become entangled in. Thus, conscientious citizens can do much to perpetuate the existence of this special creature.

Mr. President, the Hawaiian monk seal is one of Hawaii's biological treasures. Through the combined efforts of government agencies, community organizations, and ordinary citizens, we may one day witness the full recovery of the Hawaiian monk seal. It is my hope that through the education and preservation of this rare species, more people will learn to respect and value all marine life and, by extension, understand our own relationship to our living environment.●

CONGRATULATIONS TO ST. TERESA OF THE LITTLE FLOWER CATHOLIC CHURCH ON ITS APPROACHING FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Reno, Nevada's Little Flower Catholic Church, which will soon be marking its fiftieth anniversary. This amazing church has truly been a blessing for the people of northern Nevada, as it has become a pillar of strength, inspiration, and hope for the thousands who have passed through its doors.

Little Flower has truly blossomed since its first mass was celebrated on

October 17, 1948. Senator Patrick McCarran, Representative Walter Baring and area religious leaders of all denominations were just a few of those who filled the church's 200 seats on that special day. But the time Father Robert Bowling became pastor in 1974, facilities has expanded and the parish had grown to several hundred people. And, during the following year, the parish actually doubled in size. Today, under Father Bowling's continued stewardship, the church ministers to almost four thousand families, reflecting an extraordinary increase—particularly over the last twenty-five years. Moreover, each month, a Little Flower worship service is taped and later aired on local television for the benefit of those who would like to attend mass but are too infirm to do so.

In celebrating this anniversary, I am reminded of the well-known biblical passage that refers to our duty as our brother's keeper. This message is clearly not lost on the Little Flower congregation. While the church is by no means what one would consider wealthy, its parishioners' generosity is boundless. In addition to monthly donations to St. Vincent's shelter, the Little Flower distributes food vouchers to the hungry on a daily basis. A local supermarket honors the certificates and then bills the church at the end of each month. Likewise, gas vouchers are provided to stranded motorists. Bus fare is available for runaways looking to return home and for others caught in similarly difficult straits. Even money for medicine is given to the uninsured poor. Little Flower's policy holds that nobody in need is turned away, and no questions are ever asked.

Yet, Little Flower Catholic Church is not just about worship and charity; it's also a garden of personal and community development. The church operates a school that enrolls three hundred youngsters, providing top-notch religious and academic instruction. In addition, the church sponsors countless organizations such as a Mom's Group, Altar Society, Knights of Columbus, as well as Filipino, Hispanic, and youth-centered choirs. Of course, standard Marriage, Baptism and Sunday school classes are also included in the Little Flower's crowded slate of activities. Sometime I think that if a book could be written about the church's history, it may well be called the Little Flower That Could.

Father Omar, one of the parish priests, is a more recent example of Little Flower's devotion to its parishioners. Born in Colombia, with a heart big enough to fill the world, Father Omar today sets the standard for spirituality and community activism. He is truly a man for others.

Hanging over the entrance of the church chapel is a sign declaring that "love is spoken here." Indeed, it's a language the folks at Little Flower Catholic Church have clearly mastered. The church has embraced newcomers, comforted and cheered the down-

trodden, and is one of those special places that brings out the best in all of us. While its history is grand, Little Flower Catholic Church's future promises to be equally as rosy. Congratulations on the approaching fiftieth anniversary to Reno Bishop Phillip Straling, Father Bowling, the church's chapter members, and all of the parishioners that have made it such a sanctuary of unconditional love.●

CATHERINE KENNEDY

● Mr. DODD. Mr. President, our nation's struggle against the AIDS virus has been a difficult one. More and more Americans are beginning to learn the facts about this disease that has become the leading killer of U.S. adults between the ages of 25 and 44. And in recent years, we have finally begun to devote significant resources toward quality treatment and the search for a cure. But as my colleagues know, for many years, attention to the disease was severely lacking, and only a handful of people in this country were actively working for better treatment of its victims. I am proud to say that one of the true heroes and pioneers in the fight against AIDS hails from Connecticut: Catherine Kennedy of New Haven. Sadly, Mrs. Kennedy recently died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 51.

Catherine Kennedy was active on many fronts in the fight against AIDS, but she is best known for her efforts to establish Connecticut's first nursing home for people afflicted with this disease.

A native of England, Catherine Kennedy moved to New Haven in 1983. Shortly after moving to Connecticut, she noticed the lack of nursing centers and services for people in the area living with AIDS. She saw nursing homes that were refusing care to many individuals. Patients were being kept, at enormous expense, at hospitals that were essentially unequipped to treat them. And other patients were in fact homeless.

Catherine Kennedy took it upon herself to create a nursing home designed specifically to treat persons living with HIV/AIDS who were too sick to stay at home but too healthy to need hospital care. Her efforts were met with great resistance along the way.

But she eventually gained the help of Lucie McKinney, the widow of U.S. Representative Stewart McKinney, who had died of AIDS. Together they were able to convince the Governor and state legislature to support the idea of a treatment center, and a law was passed which provided funding to cover non-hospital care costs for AIDS patients and to convert an old factory in New Haven into a nursing home. She was also able to secure a grant from Yale-New Haven Hospital to help finance the home.

In 1995, eight years after Catherine Kennedy began her efforts to establish this center, Leeway, Inc. opened its

doors and became the first nursing home in Connecticut for the treatment of persons with AIDS or the HIV virus. Since it opened, Leeway has treated more than 150 individuals. And while Catherine Kennedy's original idea was to create a center to primarily provide quality care for dying patients, today nearly half of their patients are able to go home and resume their everyday lives.

Catherine Kennedy is a shining example of what one person can accomplish if they are willing to fully commit themselves to the betterment of their community. She overcame tremendous resistance and even greater odds to open this nursing home. Her determination has resulted in a better life for hundreds of people living with HIV/AIDS in Connecticut, as well as in communities all across the country who look at Leeway as a model for providing quality care.

But Catherine Kennedy touched the lives of many more people than just those who struggle with this deadly disease. She was a beloved figure by all who knew her, and she inspired those around her to ask more of themselves and reach out to others in need. She will be dearly missed.

She is survived by her husband Paul, her three sons, two brothers and two sisters. I offer my heartfelt condolences to them all.●

ELIMINATING THE BACKLOG OF VETERANS REQUESTS FOR MILITARY MEDALS

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I would like to take some time to address an unfulfilled obligation we have to our nation's veterans. The problem is a substantial backlog of requests by veterans for replacement military medals.

I first became aware of this issue a few years ago after dozens of Iowa veterans began contacting my State offices requesting assistance in obtaining medals and other military decorations they earned while serving the country. These veterans had tried in vain—usually for months, sometimes for years—to navigate the vast Pentagon bureaucracy to receive their military decorations. The wait for medals routinely exceeded more than a year, even after intervention by my staff. I believe this is unacceptable. Our nation must continue its commitment to recognize the sacrifices made by our veterans in a timely manner. Addressing this simple concern will fulfill an important and solemn promise to those who served to preserve democracy both here and abroad.

Let me briefly share the story of Mr. Dale Homes, a Korean War veteran. Mr. Holmes fired a mortar on the front lines of the Korean War. Stacy Groff, the daughter of Mr. Holmes, tried unsuccessfully for three years through the normal Department of Defense channels to get the medals her father deserved. Ms. Groff turned to me after her letter writing produced no results.

My office began an inquiry in January of 1997 and we were not able to resolve the issue favorably until September 1997.

Ms. Groff made a statement about the delays her father experienced that sum up my sentiments perfectly: "I don't think it's fair . . . My dad deserves—everybody deserves—better treatment than that." Ms. Groff could not be more correct. Our veterans deserve better than that from the country they served so courageously.

Another example that came through my district offices is Mr. James Lunde, a Vietnam-era veteran. His brother in law contacted my Des Moines office in January of this year for help in obtaining a Purple Heart and other medals Mr. Lunde earned. These medals have been held up since 1975. Unfortunately, there is still no determination as to when Mr. Lunde's medals will be sent.

The numbers are disheartening and can sound almost unbelievable. For example, a small Army Reserve staff at the St. Louis Office faces a backlog of tens of thousands of requests for medals. So why the lengthy delays? Why, at one personnel center, is there a backlog of 40,000 requests?

The primary reason DOD officials cite for these unconscionable delays is personnel and other resource shortages resulting from budget cuts and hiring freezes. For example, the Navy Liaison Office has gone from 5 or more personnel to 3 within the last 3 years. Prior to this, the turnaround time was 4-5 months. Budget shortages have delayed the agencies ability to replace employees who have left, and in cases where they can be replaced, the "learning curve" in training new employees leads to further delays.

Yesterday, during the debate over the Defense Appropriations bill, I offered an amendment to eliminate the backlog of unfulfilled military medal requests. The amendment was accepted by unanimous consent.

My amendment directs the Secretary of Defense to allocate resources necessary to eliminate the backlog of requests for military medals. Specifically, the Secretary of Defense shall make available to the Army Reserve Personnel Command, the Bureau of Naval Personnel, the Air Force Personnel Center, the National Archives and Records Administration, and any other relevant office or command, the resources necessary to solve the problem. These resources could be in the form of increased personnel, equipment or whatever these offices need for this problem. In addition, this reallocation of resources is only to be made in a way that "does not detract from the performance of other personnel service and personnel support activities within the DOD."

Our veterans are not asking for much. Their brave actions in time of war deserve our highest respect, recognition, and admiration. My amendment will help expedite the recognition they so richly deserve. Our veterans deserve nothing less.●

HONORING THE COUNTRYSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

● Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, it is my distinct pleasure to bring to the attention of the Senate the achievements of one of the Nation's most accomplished firefighting districts.

The Countryside Fire Protection District, in my home state of Illinois, has recently received accreditation from the Commission on Fire on Accreditation International. The Countryside Fire Protection District, serving the towns of Hawthorn Woods, Indian Creek, Long Grove, Vernon Hills and portions of unincorporated Lake County, was the first district in the world to be awarded this prestigious mark of firefighting quality and excellence. The Village of Long Grove, the Lake County Board and the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshall have since recognized this important achievement.

The Commission on Fire Accreditation International, created by the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the International City/County Manager Association, is a non-profit trust organization dedicated to the quality and improvement of fire and emergency service agencies. The Commission offers accreditation for local firefighting districts after a comprehensive evaluation. Accreditation is awarded if, among other qualifications, a district's firefighting program is broad, rigorous, contemporary and adaptive. The Countryside Fire Protection District, under the exemplary leadership of Chief A. Lewis Landry, has demonstrated those standards and continues to be a model for both this Nation and the international firefighting community to follow.

As a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, I am deeply impressed by the caliber of services that the Countryside Fire Protection District Provides. With admirable distinction, Chief Landry and the fire fighters of his district have gallantly protected their district from the perils of disaster, ensuring the safety of their fellow citizens. I congratulate the members of the Countryside Fire Protection District on this momentous achievement, and I extend my gratitude to you for your selfless dedication to the safety of your community and your neighbors.●

RECOGNIZING SECRETARY OF EDUCATION RICHARD RILEY

● Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today, I would like to recognize the extraordinary work and dedication of our Secretary of Education, the Honorable Richard Riley. I am quite proud to call Secretary Riley a good friend. Over many years, I have had the privilege of working closely with the Secretary to promote quality education and help children and families. I believe everyone in the Senate understands the importance of quality education for every child, even if we may sometimes disagree on the best ways to achieve this fundamental goal.